

# AN UNUSUAL CAUSE OF CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE IN AN INFANT IN ETHIOPIA

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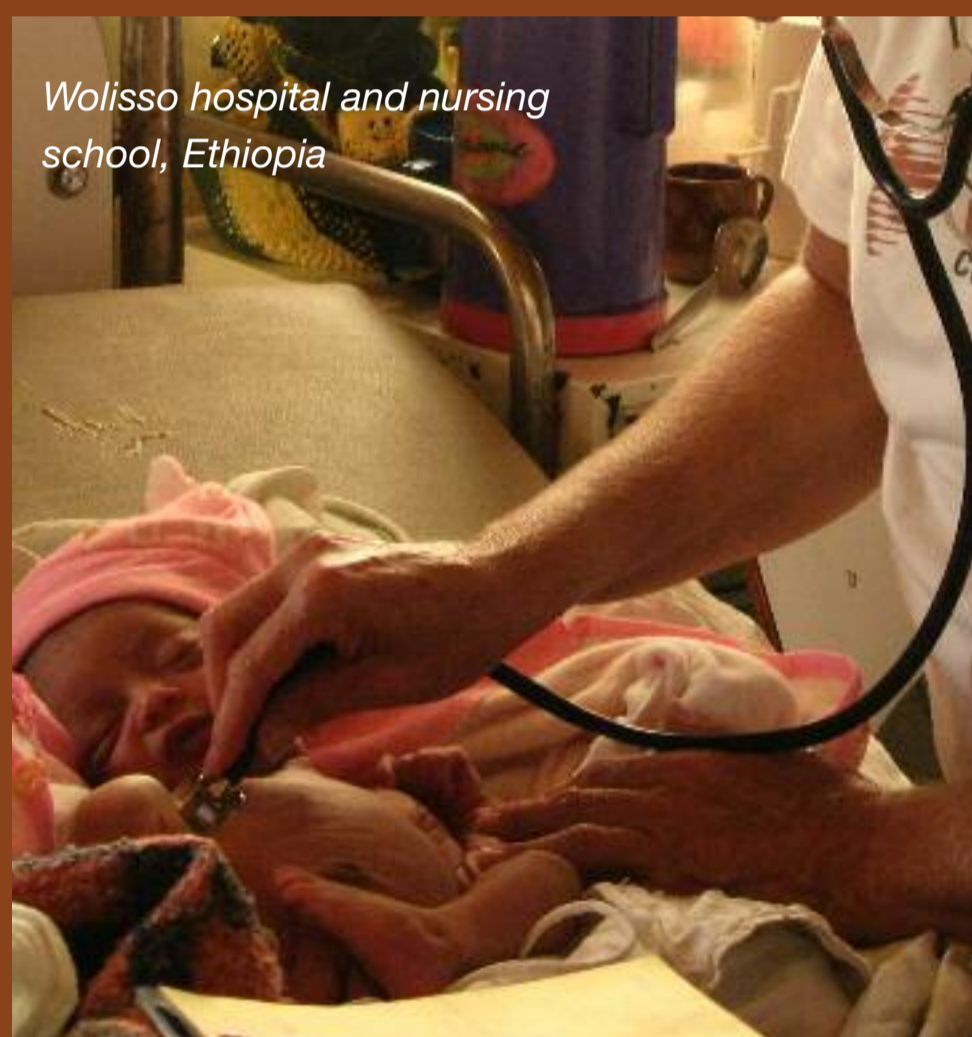
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## Objectives

To describe an unusual congenital disease leading to congestive heart failure in an infant in rural Ethiopia.

To highlight the utility of medical advice and echocardiography in rural Africa for complicated cases.

## Methods

Two infants, females, aged 18 and 30 months were seen in our hospital in Wolisso (south-west Shewa region, Ethiopia), with a clinical pattern of congestive heart failure, in March and August 2008 respectively.

In both cases the complaints were long lasting cough and dyspnea, only sometimes associated with mild fever.

Physical examination, routine laboratory examinations and chest X-ray were performed. Finally the patients underwent echocardiography with definition of the cause of the disease.

## Results

Physical examination showed pulmonary crackles, hepatomegaly and generalized body swelling in both cases, cardiac murmur and gallop rhythm in one case; laboratory blood and urine examinations results were normal; chest X-ray performed in one case showed marked cardiomegaly and congestive lung pattern.

Echocardiography showed situs viscerum

inversus in both cases, with severe atrial dilation and severe interatrial septal defect, with normal ventricular dimensions, wall thickness and contractility and no evidence of pericardial effusion. Both infants started diuretic therapy with only mild clinical improvement.

## Conclusions

Atrial septal defect is one of the most common congenital cardiac anomalies in patients affected by "situs inversus"; in the cases reported no diagnosis should have been possible in absence of echocardiography. Severe complicated diseases, especially in children in rural sub-saharian Africa, should be addressed to hospital advice were specialistic evaluation and instrumental analysis should be available. Rural hospital in Africa should be equipped of ultrasound devices and a skilled physician to identify and select patients whose pathologies could be addressed to referral hospital in main town, in order to decrease chronic diseases impact.

At present no cardiosurgery divisions are available in all Ethiopia, but a new dedicated ward will become active in Addis Ababa Black Lion Hospital to manage cases as those described.



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